

★IC 2001-1 TO AFI 34-1101, ASSISTANCE TO SURVIVORS OF PERSONS KILLED IN  
AIR FORCE AVIATION MISHAPS AND OTHER INCIDENTS

7 SEPTEMBER 2001

★**SUMMARY OF REVISIONS**

This change directs the Air Force to provide the same level of care to the survivors of any Air Force team member who dies, regardless of how the member dies or where assigned. This includes the appointment of a Family Liaison Officer (FLO) and all support/assistance allowed by law. It also recommends a FLO be offered to an active duty member in the event of the death of an immediate family member. Responsibilities for wing commanders, unit commanders who experience the death of a member, MAJCOM SVs, base mortuary affairs officers, and FLOs are clarified. One-year anniversary condolence letters for all active duty deaths are required. These letters are generated by the losing unit, signed by the wing/installation commander, with a signed copy forwarded to the base Mortuary Affairs Office, the MAJCOM SV, and HQ USAF/ILV. Requirement for FLOs to maintain family contact logs and provide a completed copy to the mortuary affairs office for inclusion in the mortuary case file is added. Samples of FLO appointment orders and the one-year anniversary condolence letter are added. A star (★) indicates revisions from the previous edition.

★OPR: AF/ILVQ (Maj Kathleen E. Weatherspoon)

★1.1.1. The Air Force has numerous resources to draw upon following the death of an Air Force team member. The Air Force team includes active duty, reserve, guard, and civilian federal employees. The Air Force may sometimes also assist families of private citizens, e.g., private citizen killed by Air Force plane crash or AF retiree killed while travelling Space-A or contractor killed while supporting the Air Force mission. However, it is difficult to accurately forecast the amount of assistance required or even available, or the duration for which it might be needed, in any future incident. While many institutions are geared toward improving our people's quality of life, those same institutions, along with many other purpose-designed processes, may play a significant role in supporting survivors upon the death of an Air Force team member. Regardless of the category of the deceased, the family should be rendered the maximum level of assistance permitted by law.

★1.1.1.1. This AFI will concentrate on aircraft incidents due to their catastrophic impact and public interest. However, the survivors of any Air Force member or civilian employee who dies, regardless of cause of death or place of assignment, should be provided a FLO and the maximum level of assistance permitted by law.

★1.1.1.2 Additionally, commanders should consider appointing a FLO to assist active duty members who experience a death in their immediate family.

★1.4.1.2 For the purposes of this instruction, the next-of-kin is defined as that person whose name appears on the DD Form 93, *Record of Emergency Data*, in the deceased member's Unit Personnel Record Group. (See Attachment 11 to this instruction, as well as AFI 36-3002, Chapters 3 and 7, for an expanded discussion of this form's use and importance.) The NOK is

frequently called upon to make decisions and choices, which require comprehensive explanation and sound advice. The burden of these responsibilities, coupled with an unexpected loss of a loved one, mandates that the NOK be the primary focus of all such services and considerations described in this instruction.

★1.4.1.3. For the purposes of this instruction, unless a specific individual previously has been identified by the deceased to be notified in an emergency (i.e., on the DD Form 93), the next-of kin will be presumed to be the person most closely related to the victim: the parents(s) of a single person without children, a spouse, or child(ren) of a single parent.

**★2.1. The Chain of Command of the Unit Experiencing the Loss.** Military operations carry with them an inherent risk of loss. Commanders have an ongoing obligation to ensure the members under their command are aware of those risks and manage them responsibly. In turn, members owe it to their families to keep them aware of the nature of their duties and the hazards they entail. Post-loss support of the survivors of deceased military members is an inherent obligation of command. By extension, if persons from outside the unit, including civilians, suffer loss of life as a result of Air Force operations, the chain of command of the unit most closely associated with the event must ensure support and assistance are rendered to those survivors to the maximum extent allowable by law. Wing/installation commanders attempting to fulfill such obligations will be supported by their parent MAJCOM. Should Air Force-level assistance be required (for logistics, funding, etc), the Office of Survivor Assistance (see paragraph 2.11) will work with the entire chain of command to help execute the provisions of this instruction as fully as possible. (Support to the families of civilians is expanded upon in Chapter 7 of this instruction). Specific responsibilities are as follows:

★2.1.2.2.1. The MAJCOM SV will appoint a MAJCOM survivor assistance representative to administer the survivor assistance program. Actions include, but are not limited to, promoting survivor assistance awareness, monitoring FLO training and one-year anniversary condolence letters, and reporting to HQ USAF/ILV as required.

★2.1.3.3. Take responsibility for initiating timely and effective flow of information to the families of persons involved in an AF mishap, when one of their aircraft is associated with such a loss or when an investigative report of any type is initiated due to the death.

★2.1.3.6. Ensure sufficient number of FLOs are appointed and trained, considering the installation aircraft, runway capacity, and mission requirements. It is recommended every unit provide a minimum of two FLOs (one officer and one senior enlisted) and flying squadrons provide as many FLOs as the maximum crew complement. For example, an installation with aircraft requiring a crew of one may not need as many FLOs as an installation with aircraft requiring a crew of eight.

★2.1.3.7. Appoint, on orders, one FLO per family. (Sample FLO order is at Attachment 12). Typically, a FLO is appointed from the home base of the deceased. However, it is sometimes more beneficial to the family to appoint a FLO from a base closer to that family. Coordinate this assistance, as necessary.

★2.1.3.8. Forward a one-year anniversary condolence letter to next of kin and family members. The unit who lost the member(s) prepares this letter. The base SV, MAJCOM SV, and HQ USAF/ILV must be included as cc recipients. (Sample condolence letter is at Attachment 13).

★2.1.4.3. Prepare a one-year anniversary condolence letter for wing commander signature approximately 30 days before the one-year anniversary death date of their unit member. The base SV, MAJCOM SV, and HQ USAF/ILV must be included as cc recipients. (Sample condolence letter is at Attachment 13).

★2.2.1 Are nominated to wing/installation commanders by unit commanders and provided initial training by the Services squadron or Services division personnel in accordance with this instruction *before* a fatal mishap requires their services. Family Liaison Officers should be appointed in writing by the wing/installation commander.

★2.2.7 Should be “crew counterparts” (i.e., pilots for the families of pilots, navigators for the families of navigators, squadron members, etc) whenever practical. CAUTION: Before recommending a FLO to the wing/installation commander for appointment, the unit commander should make every effort to determine the recommended individual is not too close to the situation (i.e., dealing with own grief) to be effective in assisting the family.

★2.2.8. May be senior noncommissioned officers (E-7 or higher) to support the family of an enlisted member.

★2.2.9. May be Guardsmen, Reservists, or AF civilian personnel. (Consult with civilian personnel specialist before appointment of a civilian FLO to ensure compliance with possible duty restrictions.)

★2.2.17. Will keep a log documenting time, place, duration, and subjects covered, etc. for each contact with the family. FLOs will maintain contact with the Mortuary Affairs Officer/NCO and provide updates as requested by that office. This log will be turned into the Mortuary Affairs Officer/NCO for filing in the Mortuary Case File (when a case file is opened) upon completion of FLO duties.

★2.6.3. Base-level Family Support Centers may establish contingency “Family Assistance Centers” (FAC) following major mishaps to coordinate family-oriented activities. If established, this capability will be included in local disaster response plans and exercised at least annually, preferably in conjunction with a Major Accident Response Exercise (MARE). Pre-planning must include: responsibilities of FSC and supporting base personnel in activating and staffing the FAC; designated facilities for FAC operations, including communications and supply requirements; augmentee sources for 24-hour or mass casualty operations.

## **★2.8. The Mortuary Affairs Officer:**

★2.8.1. The base mortuary affairs officer is appointed by the installation commander in accordance with AFI 34-242, *Mortuary Affairs Program*. The base mortuary affairs officer is the base Services commander, director, or deputy who administers and executes the program for the

installation commander. The base mortuary affairs officer is specifically prohibited from being assigned to casualty notification or family liaison officer duty.

★2.8.2. The base mortuary affairs officer oversees the administration of the survivor assistance program for the installation commander and will:

★2.8.2.1. Promote survivor assistance awareness.

★2.8.2.2. Facilitate FLO training.

★2.8.2.3. Maintain contact with FLOs throughout the casualty process and report status/issues/progress, etc to MAJCOM POC as required.

★2.8.2.4. Obtain FLO logs and incorporate into mortuary case files (when a mortuary case file is opened).

★2.8.2.5. Remind units that have lost members about the one-year anniversary condolence letters and assist if necessary. Reminders will come from HQ USAF/ILV via MAJCOM SVs.

★2.8.2.6. Obtain a copy of one-year anniversary condolence letters and file in mortuary case files.

★2.8.3. Other mortuary functions are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6 of this publication.

★3.1.4. Services Squadrons/Divisions will facilitate annual awareness training to wing leadership, group and squadron commanders, and first sergeants.

★6.3.1.2. AFPAM 34-261, *Mortuary Services Benefits For Members Who Die While On Active Duty*: this is an extremely useful pre-need publication which should be reviewed by all FLOs prior to first contact with family members of a deceased active duty member. It is addressed to members rather than family members, and thus should be used as reference material rather than as a document to be provided to the family.

★6.5.5. The remains of persons lost in Air Force aviation mishaps or to other causes of death which occur outside the United States may be returned to the United States by way of the Air Force Mortuary at Dover AFB. “Arrival ceremonies” at the aerial port of entry are not normally conducted. However, remains are received with honor, dignity, and respect.

★7.4.2. The families of persons who lose their lives in conjunction with an Air Force mishap will sometimes be accorded the same opportunities for family liaison officers and investigation information flow accorded all other categories of personnel discussed in this instruction. For example, a FLO would generally be utilized to assist the surviving family of a private citizen killed while flying as an authorized passenger aboard an Air Force aircraft for official purposes.

**References:**

ADD--AFI 34-242, *Mortuary Affairs Program*

DELETE--AFI-501, *Mortuary Affairs Program*

ADD--AFPD, 34-11, *Service to Survivors*

**Terms:**

Total Force definition--DELETE

★A2.2.1. Create individual survivor assistance case files for each decedent containing the following information:

★A3.1.1. Review AFI 44-153, AFPD 34-11, and AFI 34-1101.

★A.3.1.3. Ensure establishment of at least one local CIST.

★A.3.2.6. Determine if the unit will be activating a Family Assistance Team or if base-level support of such an effort will be required.

★A3.4.1.1. Status of mortuary affairs arrangements (with Services Commander/Director)

★A3.8.1. Forward a one-year anniversary condolence letter to next-of-kin/family members to reiterate the Air Force's sympathies and assess whether the survivors have been receiving the assistance and support they need. The unit who lost the member(s) prepares this letter. The base SV, MAJCOM SV, and HQ USAF/ILV must be included as cc recipients. (Sample condolence letter is at Attachment 13).

★A3.8.2 Consider the appropriateness of a brief memorial service marking the event.

★A4.1.1. Review AFPD 34-11 and AFI 34-1101.

★A4.2.4. Activate Family Assistance Team if previously organized; request base level support as needed.

**★A4.6. On the first anniversary of the mishap:**

★A4.6 1. Generate a one-year anniversary condolence letter for wing commander signature to be sent to next-of-kin/family members to reiterate the Air Force's sympathies and assess whether the survivors have been receiving the assistance and support they need. The base SV, MAJCOM SV, and HQ USAF/ILV must be included as cc recipients.

★A4.6.2. Consider the appropriateness of a brief memorial service marking the event.

★A5.2.6. Determine how often you need to brief the Mortuary Affairs Officer/NCO, Group Commander, Wing Commander or other parties on the status of your dealings with the family.

★A5.2.7. Begin a log or journal recording time, place, duration, and subjects covered for each contact with the family.

★A5.7. **Upon completion of contact with the family (after investigation is complete and briefed or when family disengages):** Turn a copy of your log detailing contacts with the family into the base mortuary affairs office.

★A11.1.2. Know the purpose and contents of each of the AFSAP's source documents: AFD 34-11, *Service to Survivors*; AFI 34-1101, *Assistance to Families of Persons Killed in Air Force Aviation Mishaps and Other Incidents*, and the USAF Survivor Assistance Resource Guide.

**★Attachment 12 (Added)**

**SAMPLE FAMILY LIAISON OFFICER (FLO) APPOINTMENT**

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE  
XX SQUADRON (MAJCOM)  
XXXX AIR FORCE BASE, ANY STATE XXXXX-XXXX

SPECIAL ORDER

Date

MARY A. JONES, SSN, RANK, USAF, XX FLIGHT, XX SQUADRON, XXXXX AIR  
FORCE BASE, ANY STATE XXXXX-XXXX, IS APPOINTED AS THE FAMILY LIAISON  
OFFICER FOR THE FAMILY OF THE DECEASED, MAJOR JOHN DOE, SSN,  
AUTHORITY: 34-1101.

APPROVING OFFICIAL

JOE E. SMITH, MAJOR  
COMMANDER  
XX SQUADRON

JOHNNY BROWN, COLONEL, USAF  
COMMANDER  
XX WING

DISTRIBUTION "D"

**★Attachment 13 (Added)**

**SAMPLE ONE-YEAR CONDOLENCE LETTER**

Date

WG/CC  
550 C Street West, Suite 14  
XXXX AFB, XX 78150-4716

Mrs. Jane Doe  
123 Special Lane  
Your Town, TX 78148

Dear Mrs. Doe

A year has passed since we lost your husband, Major John Doe. We remember his contribution to the Air Force and still mourn his loss. I want you to know that you will always be a part of the Air Force family. We remain committed to providing you the most professional, timely, and compassionate assistance whenever required. Major \_\_\_\_\_ will call you in the next few weeks to see if we can be of any assistance at this time.

I also want to remind you about the Air Force Survivor Assistance Office. That office is the single point of contact in the Air Force that marshals all available resources together to help families. You can reach them by calling their toll free number 1-877-USAFHELP (1-877-872-3435), or by email (<http://survivorassistance.afsv.af.mil>). Please feel free to contact me by writing or calling (000) 555-1234, or emailing at [wg/CC@base.af.mil](mailto:wg/CC@base.af.mil).

Sincerely

Name, rank  
Commander

cc:  
BASE/SV  
HQ MAJCOM/SV  
HQ USAF/ILV